

Mason, Eudo C., Goethe's Faust Its Genesis and Purpose (University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles) 1967

p. 284 This point is important because the Higher Critics have tried to demonstrate one of their beloved contradictions between the "Prolog im Himmel" and the rest of Faust, especially the Pact scene, which is in reality most closely co-ordinated with it.

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p. 298 Those critics, however, who maintain on quite insufficient grounds that Mephisto in the "Prolog im Himmel" disavows or renounces all interest in the fate of Faust's soul after his death,²⁷ find an irreconcilable contradiction between these two wagers - a contradiction only to be accounted for by Goethe's having written one of the relevant passages (probably that in the Pact scene) so much earlier than the other, that during the interval his original plan was forgotten or changed. This view is to be most energetically rejected. The two wagers are quite clearly geared to one another and are as consistent with one another as Goethe himself, who knew what he was getting at, saw any necessity for making them, and in both it is a question of whether Faust's soul is to belong after his death to Mephisto or to the Lord.

p. 304 Max Morris, Niejahr, Spiess, and others have tried to demonstrate with minutest philological evidence, and with the most varied results that there are traces of Goethe's having about 1788, or perhaps even as early as 1774, negligently superimposed upon an original plan, according to which Mephisto should have been merely Faust's "servant" ("Dienstverhältnis"), a later plan, according to which he was to have been merely his "companion" ("freier Bund") - or vice versa. This is supposed to have occasioned all sorts of "insoluble contradictions." The fact would appear to be that Goethe from the outset wished to leave this issue open. . . . This intentional nebulousness of Goethe's has even led some critics, amongst them Grutzmacher, Wolff, and Daur, to maintain the quite impossible thesis that the pact, as we now have it, turns solely upon the duration of Faust's earthly life and that his "Seelenheil" (the salvation of his soul) is not at stake in it.

p. 306 Herein the "Higher Critics" see one of those "irreconcilable contradictions" which interest them more than anything else in Goethe's Faust. But the programme that Mephisto here formulates is that which he consistently pursues throughout the rest of the drama. . . Mephisto's undertaking to satisfy Faust is in fact inconsistent not only with his later monologue in the same scene, but also with the entire rest of the drama. We can, of course, explain this discrepancy with the favourite hypothesis of the "Higher Critics" that Goethe has here simply muddled up two different plans. But there may be some other, more satisfying explanation than this.